

PLAGUE

Written by: Tripp Mendoza

Chapter one: The Pain

I was home alone while doing the dishes, when it happened. There was a sharp and sudden pain at the left side of my head, making me yelp out. It was so sudden that I dropped a plate causing it to shatter on the ground. The pain was so much that my legs gave out beneath me. Catching myself on the edge of the counter I wondered “*what is happening?*” My vision was starting to get blurry and lights became too much to handle, causing me to squint. Pushing off the counter and using the walls to keep me upright, I stumbled to the hallway. I could barely keep my eyes open as I reached the hallway closet. My hands became cold and I could barely feel them as I slung the closet door open. I grabbed the red blur that was once an emergency bag, hoping that something in it could help me, it was about the size of a small backpack. Before I could open it, I fell to the ground with a thud. The pain had doubled. My eyes started to water, making the world seem even more blurry than before, the pain making me sweat. I could do nothing but curl into the fetal position with the red blur, shutting my eyes, praying that the pain would go away.

Fluttering my eyes open, I notice that I’m sitting down on the ground in an alley with my back up against the wall of a building. I touched my head where the pain had started, feeling nothing but my brown hair that had been dampened from the sweat. Looking in my lap, I see that I still have the red bag. I look to my right to see people passing by, but they are dressed strangely. I try to get up but my legs are sore, I stretch them a little before gingerly standing up. Still a little lightheaded from the pain, I walk out of the alley and into what seems to be a small town. I carry the red bag under my arm as I roam around the streets, people passing by give me funny looks and stare at me. *Why are they staring at me?* I think to myself, *They are the ones dressed*

strangely. After a few minutes, a boy around the same age as me, around 14-15, came up to me and started asking questions out of the blue.

“Who are you?” He asks sharply, his accent sounding british. He has a shorter build than me, around 1~2 inches shorter. His hair looks to be blonde but you could barely tell due to how dirty he was. I look him up and down, his clothes look similar to the people around us, a brown shirt that has holes in it and seems a little too big for him, his pale-ish pants are tied to his waist with a rope, his cuffs muddled. But the most peculiar thing I noticed about him was his lack of footwear.

“Well? Are you deaf? Who are you?” He says, repeating himself. I respond, finally, by saying “I can hear very well, thank you. My name is Tripp” When I say this, the boy looks at me with an almost disgusted expression. After a few seconds he follows up with another question.

“Where are you from?”

“America”

The boy changes his look of disgust to a look of confusion. *What is this guy's problem?*

“What’s an ‘America’?” We now share the same expression of confusion. I ask the only thing that’s been on my mind since I got here.

“What year is it?” The next thing that the boy says sends me into shock.

“1346” *What? This guy has to be lying! I... I CAN'T be in 1346.*

“You feeling well? He asks, seeing the pure distress on my face. My breathing becomes shallow and I clutch onto the red bag that is now pressed against my chest. I drop the emergency bag onto the ground and grab the boy by his shoulders.

“PLEASE!” I realize how loud I am and lower my volume, my tone still frantic, “Please.. Please tell me you’re lying.” The boy looks at me with fright as I practically beg him to tell me

he's lying. Suddenly the pain came back, but nowhere near as strong as last time, and I let go of the boy and collapse on the ground. I lose consciousness, but before I do I hear the boys fading voice calling for help.

Chapter two: The Boy

When I awoke, I was almost relieved that I was in bed, thinking that I was back in the safety of my home. Then I hear a familiar voice.

“You right?” It was the boy. The relief washing off my face as I come to terms with my newfound predicament, dread starting to build in my stomach. He’s sitting in a makeshift chair next to my bed, made of sticks and rope.

“Yeah, I’m fine” I say to him, as I start to look around the room we reside in. The walls, if you could even call them that, were full of holes, the roof being the only thing keeping us dry from the drizzle outside. The bed I lie on is made of straw, the stray strands poking my thighs and back. There is a small table that looks so short you would have to sit on your knees to eat on it.

“What happened back there?” The boy asks. I sit up on the bed before I answer.

“Nothing. Just surprised, was all.”

“Surprised about what? The year?”

“Forget it, It’s better if you don’t know”

“Alright...” The boy says skeptically. We sit there in silence for a few seconds before I break it.

“Where’s my bag?”

“This?” The boy says, pulling up the red bag from under his chair.

“Thanks.” I say as he gives it to me.

After all this time I finally open the bag, inside is a bar of soap, toothbrush and toothpaste, a drawstring bag, water filter, some painkillers and antibiotics, rat poison and a set of clothes. The boy looks at the items, puzzled. I quickly put them away.

“Hey, I’ve never got your name.” I say to the boy, to distract him.

“Oh it’s, Peter.”

“Nice to meet you, Peter.” I say extending my hand to shake his.

“Nice to meet you, Tripp.” Peter and I shake hands, at least now I know I’m not alone on this journey. I get up from the bed and now realize that I’m just wearing socks. The bag doesn't seem to have a pair of shoes, so I decide to just walk in my socks until I find something. My stomach let out a loud grumble, even Peter heard it. I haven’t eaten anything since I came here and who knows how long I was out for.

“We should go to the market to get something to eat.” Peter suggests. I agree and we make our way out of the door. My socks dampening as we walk.

As we walk we hear a large group of people shouting things. We walk over to where all the commotion is and see a guillotine posted in the middle of the square. There seems to be a man standing up on the platform reading off a sheet of paper.

“Adam Feathergree, you shall be executed for the crime of treason against the king!” I’m guessing the man is a messenger from the king. He continues, “For this reason you shall be beheaded, OFF WITH HIS HEAD!” He shouts loudly. He walks off the platform, and I could have sworn I saw him smile, as Adam Feathergree walks up onto the platform. His hands are tied behind his back, walking in front of the executioner.

“Maybe we should get out of here.” I say to Peter.

“It’s about to get to the good part.” Peter responds. I am shocked that he has seen these before and that there is a “good part”.

The crowd around us then starts to throw insults at Adam, calling him things that I dare not repeat. As the executioner lies Adam down onto the guillotine, lining his neck up with the blade, Adam pleads for forgiveness. I can’t help but feel sick as the blade rises up. I hear a woman crying behind me and turn around, I’m guessing that she must be Adam’s wife. Behind me I hear a “SH-UNK ” then a “THUD” and the crowd starts cheering of all things. I’m glad I missed it, I don’t know if I could live with myself knowing what a 1300’s execution looks like. Even without seeing it I feel sick and traumatized. That was a person that had a wife, friends and family. Peter snaps me out of it by asking me if I still wanna go to the market. I nod my head and we continue our way to the market. While we walk I see people on the streets that look sickly.

“What happened to them?” I ask Peter.

“Oh, I think it’s this new sickness going around. Don’t worry It’s probably not that bad!” He says gleefully as we continue to walk. I rack my brain trying to think, *What sickness could be this bad in 1346?* Then it hits me. The Black Death.

Chapter three: The Market

As Peter leads the way to the market, I follow behind and take a look at the place where I will be staying for who knows how long. The clouds parted a little and the rain stopped, allowing me to see that it was around noon. I then look at the houses that line the dirt road. The walls are made of cobblestone with large holes in them to act as windows. The roofs look like tightly woven straw that is placed on top of the house's scaffolding.

“We’re here!” Peter says as we approach the market. The stands are made of tables with their goods sprawled across them. Some are selling fish and meats, others are selling fruits and vegetables, and some are even selling baked goods! Peter suggests that we should just get some apples and beans. That sounds good to me, so we walk up to a man who is selling some fruits and vegetables.

“Could we please have two apples and a handful of beans please, sir?” Peter says to the man.

“6 shillings.” The man said with a stern and demanding tone.

“How about 4 shilli-” Peter gets interrupted by the man.

“6 Shillings.” His tone is more demanding with a hint of anger.

“Alright then.” Peter says as he reaches into a bag that is tied to his rope belt and gives the man 6 small silver coins. The man hands Peter a small sack of beans and gives me the two apples. As we walk away I examine the apples. They are marginally smaller than what they are

in the future, barely fitting in the palm of my hand. They look somewhat normal so I bite into it. It's bitter and a little mushy. I inform Peter of this.

"That guy must have sold us spoiled ones, and at a steep price too." He sighs. "I guess we'll have to make due." Peter doesn't seem to be all that angry, just mildly annoyed. It feels like he has been through this same situation before.

We walk back through the town back to our "house". Me and Peter have already eaten and finished the apples, eating all the way to the core. As we walk I notice even more sick looking people and express my concern to Peter.

"Peter, are you sure that this sickness will just blow over?"

"Of course! I'm sure of it!" His tone is optimistic. Now that I've gotten to know him he's a very kind person, very different from the Peter I first met.

"Listen, Peter.. I have to tell you something.." I say as we reach the house.

"What is it?" He says, placing the bag of beans on the small table.

"You might not believe me, but I'm from the future." I say tensely, waiting for his response.

"The future?" Peter raises his eyebrow skeptically, just as I guessed.

"Yes really. Look, this 'sickness' that is going around right now is actually the deadliest plague in history." I tell him frantically. He doesn't seem convinced. "Listen, have you been in any close contact with rats or any animals?"

"Now that I think about it. There have been rats running through here." This sends a shock down my spine before he continues. "...but I haven't touched any." I sigh a breath of relief.

Through the holes in the walls I see that the sun has begun to set. I notice how dirty I am so I take the emergency bag, with the soap in it, and ask Peter where I can wash up.

“Is there any place where I can go wash myself? Maybe like a river?” I ask.

“River? That’s where we wash our clothes. If you want to wash yourself then use that.”

Peter says as he points to a pitcher looking thing sitting next to the bed.

“That?”

“Yes, that. Go to the back so no one sees you.”

I gather my nerve, grab the pitcher and walk to the back of the house. It is dusk now, painting the sky with deep shades of blues and oranges. The land that surrounds us is flat plains and I can see every star in the sky. Nothing like the sky back home. Before I can dwell on the fact, I remind myself why I came out here. *I need to wash up*. I see that there is a basin full of water, probably filled with rain water. I strip down to my pants, grab the bar of soap from the bag and start to wash myself.

A few minutes later, I finish washing myself and dry off using my old shirt. I change into the spare clothes that are in the bag before I walk back into the house. The water was freezing but it wasn’t that bad. As I walk in, Peter is sleeping on a pile of straw on the ground next to the bed. Leaving it to me. I set my bag down next to the bed and sit on the edge, thinking of what all has happened in such a short amount of time. *Will I ever get back?* I think to myself, *What will happen after I leave? Will I go back to my time or another?*

From the ground next to the bed I hear a quiet “Hey.”, it’s Peter. I should thank him for how many times he’s prevented me from having a breakdown.

“What is it?” I whisper back as I lay down on the bed. There is a moment of silence before he responds.

“If you’re really from the future. What’s going to happen in the next few years?” Peter has a tone that I haven’t heard from him. Sadness. *What will he think if I tell him that nearly 50% of the population will die?*

“Well... without giving too much.” I take a deep breath, “The sickness will just get worse.” I brace myself for Peter’s reaction, expecting him to lash out in anger or start crying.

“Oh... Well.. I’m fine with that.” To my surprise Peter seems accepting of this. “At least I can see my family again.” I never even questioned as to why he’s alone, living by himself. I look over the side of the bed and see Peter with his eyes closed, smiling. *I should probably go to sleep too.* I close my eyes and drift off.

Chapter four: The Fever

I slowly open my eyes and sit up in bed. It is still dark outside, but I hear some people passing by so it must be early morning. I look over to see if Peter is awake, he's still sleeping. I feel sorry for him. He must have been alone for who knows how long before I came along. I exhale sharply and get out of bed. *I should familiarize myself with the area.* I think to myself. *After all, who knows how long I'll be here.* Before I leave I take 5 silver coins from Peter's bag, just in case as I quietly walk out of the house and look around. There is a slight breeze that nips at my nose. I look to the left and right of our house and see similar looking buildings, varying in quality. This must be the "poor" side of town. I walk down the street to the left and watch as people go about their day. I've never realized how much we take for granted in the future. These people will live their lives with no electricity yet, when there is a black out the whole country goes crazy.

I see a building with a sign above it that reads "Bakery", I wonder what could be in there. As I walk in the smell of fresh bread fills my nose, after smelling nothing but rotting apples and body odor the smell of bread is euphoric. I walk up to the counter and clear my throat to get the attention of the baker. The bakers walk out from behind a wall. He is a tall man, about 6 feet, he has a beard that covers his mouth, and has a very friendly looking face.

"What can I get for ya this fine morning?" He says, his voice warm and cheerful.

“Can I get two loaves of bread please?” I hope that request is not too outlandish in this time.

“Sure! It’ll run you 4 shillings.” He says as he uses a large and flat piece of wood to bring two loaves of bread out from the oven.

“Alright then!” I say with a smile on my face. He wraps the loaves up in some paper and hands it to me as I give him the 4 shillings. I thank him as I leave his store. The loaves are very hot but not scorching so I hold them close to warm myself up. I decide to go back home and have breakfast with Peter. It’s so nice to meet a person so kind in this time.

I reach our house and walk in. Peter is now awake but still in bed. I walk over to him and give him one of the loaves of bread.

“So that’s where you were. I was wondering if you just left.” He says jokingly.

“Why would I? You’re the only person who would let me stay.” He both chuckle as we both eat our loaves of bread. The bread is heaven compared to what I’ve eaten here so far. The warmth entering in from my mouth and gliding down to my stomach. Warming my core.

After we finish up, we eat a few beans and get ready. Peter stands up but then starts to stumble. I run over to hold him steady and sit him back down.

“Is everything alright?” I ask him.

“Yeah fine, probably just a cold.” He says. I feel his forehead with the back of my palm and sure enough, he’s burning up.

“You have a fever.”

“Well, I’ll just stay here. Run down to the doctors and have them do a housecall.” Peter suggests.

“Yeah. I’ll do that. Where is it exactly?”

“It’s just down the street to the right, you can’t miss it.” He says as he hands me the bag of coins.

“Okay. I’ll get back as soon as possible.” I say to him as I walk out the door again.

I walk down the street but to the right this time. It looks exactly like what’s down to the left but there are more houses. I continue walking down the street until I see a building with a big sign hanging above the door that reads “Doctor”. This must be the place. I walk in, there is a little ring from the bell attached to the door. The place is a large room, mostly empty space, with chairs and medical looking tools strewn about. From the back of the room I can see the doctor working on a patient, and it is at this moment that I recognized that Anastasia is a blessing. The patient is screaming in pain, even with a rag in his mouth as a makeshift gag it’s so loud. I sit in one of the chairs near the door as I wait for the doctor to be done.

It takes about 10 minutes for the doctor to finish. He is wearing a bird mask and a long black robe that covers his body completely. He walks over to me and asks what I need.

“What seems to be the problem, little boy?” His voice is muffled a little from the mask but I can hear him clearly.

“My friend is sick and needs help.” I say. “He can’t get out of bed so he can’t come here.”

“I’ll do a housecall.” The doctor says as he grabs a large black bag. “Show me the way.”

“Follow me.” I say as he follows me out the door and to the street.

We get to the house and walk in. Peter is still in bed but is eating some of the beans from the sack. The doctor then introduces himself to Peter and me.

“I am Doctor Jackson. What symptoms are you experiencing?” His voice is gravely and low.

“Well, I’ve been feeling hot and fatigued,” Peter says to Doctor Jackson.

“And when did this start?” Dr. Jackson replies.

“About the time I woke up.”

“I see.” Dr. Jackson says as he rummages through his bag, looking for something. He pulls out a glass jar full of leeches. “This will help.” He says while using tweezers to pull out a leech, and places it on Peter's arm. “The leeches will suck out all the bad blood and leave nothing but good blood.” I know that this practice doesn’t work but what else could I do? The doctor then put 2 more leeches on Peter’s arms.

After a few minutes Dr. Jackson took the leeches off.

“I think that should do it.” Dr. Jackson says. “That will be 10 shillings.” He extends his hand, awaiting payment.

“Alright.” I pull a few coins out of the bag and hand them to the doctor.

“Thank you.” He says as he leaves the house.

I watch him leave. I turn to face Peter and he’s not looking too hot. His skin looks pale and he's sweating buckets.

“Peter, do you feel any better?” I ask with concern.

“Yeah. Yeah, I’m fine.” He says weakly. He’s laying down on his back now.

“Maybe these will help.” I grab my emergency bag and start to look through it. I pull out a bottle of capsules, antibiotics. “Here. Take two of these.” He looks at the bottle puzzled, it would be over 500 years before these are invented. “Just take them. They’ll make you feel better.”

“Okay?” Peter says skeptically as he takes two capsules and swallows them.

This has got to work. If he dies I won't have anywhere to go and nobody to trust. Suddenly, there is a sharp pain at the left side of my head. It's back. I fall to the floor, riving in pain. Peter sits up and tries to help. I push him back, If he tries to help me he might get hurt. My vision starts to blur again and there is a loud ringing in my ears. Ringing so loud it's deafening. I start to get light headed and I start to black out. *No, I can't go back yet. I have to help Peter.* I think as I slowly get consumed by the darkness.

I open my eyes and see that I am on the ground of my house. My house in the 21st century. I look around, it looks like I never even left. Everything is just as it was before I got sent back. I stand up and walk around my house. I go back to the hallway closet and see that the emergency bag is missing. It must have stayed back with Peter. I sit on the ground with my back on the wall and I think of all that's happened while I was back there. The execution, the market, the bakery, the doctor. All of it was real, no doubt about it. I hope Peter is okay, he looked very sick before I left. My eyes begin to get misty as I think of what could have happened to Peter. Before I start to breakdown, I wipe my eyes and go back to finish the dishes.

THE END